PMDC pledges to address concerns over admissions

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) has vowed to take all possible steps to address the concerns of students, parents and all stakeholders regarding admissions in medical and dental colleges.

The council said it was working on practical solutions as discussed in the recent meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on National Health Services.

It is worth mentioning that the parliamentary committee, in a recent meeting, grilled the PMDC and suggested addressing the issues of candidates who appeared in the MDCAT. Moreover, the committee also directed the council to find a solution for the vacant seats in private medical and dental colleges, as a number of seats remain vacant or become vacant once a student leaves the college.

"The council is committed to ensuring that examination standards remain uniform, transparent and fair each year. Digitalisation and standardisation measures are being strengthened so that every student receives equal and merit-based opportunities," it stated in a press release.

"To address the issue of vacant seats in medical and dental colleges, PMDC, together with universities and the Law Division, is preparing a legally sound and transparent plan to prevent seat wastage and ensure the timely placement of eligible candidates," PMDC.

It also pledged to maintain close coordination with IBCC to ensure fairness between Cambridge-system and local board students.

"PMDC considers every student an essential part of the system and remains fully dedicated to safeguarding their academic interests. The council will continue to extend full cooperation at every forum to ensure maximum relief for students. Every decision of PMDC is guided by the principles of merit, transparency and adherence to national standards," it said.

"The council reiterates its dedication to functioning as a professional, transparent and student-centred regulator. The council will continue strengthening Pakistan's medical and dental education system, ensuring that it remains fair, credible and aligned with international benchmarks," it added.

ICRC, PRCS host global moot on reuniting families

ISLAMABAD: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in collaboration with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), hosted a 'Global conference on restoring family links.

Following the successful editions held in 2021 and 2023, the 2025 conference brought together eight families from across Pakistan whose relatives have become separated abroad because of international migration, mainly towards Europe.

The event aimed to provide these families a safe space to connect, share their experiences and strengthen mutual support through a global solidarity network.

Organised by the ICRCs central tracing agency together with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies around the world, the conference serves as a unique international platform for families who have lost contact with loved ones due to natural disasters, international migration, or other humanitarian emergencies.

This year, several conference hubs are being hosted simultaneously, bringing together hundreds of families from diverse contexts to share their stories and learn from each other.

In her remarks, PRCS Chairperson Farzhana Naek said ICRC and PRCS continue to work together under the Restoring Family Links (RFL) programme to help people separated from their families following migration, natural disasters or other humanitarian crises. The programme is part of a global effort by the Family Links Network to locate and reconnect separated relatives. — APP

HEAVY machinery at work on expansion of Faizabad Interchange in Islamabad on Saturday. — Photo by Tanveer Shahzad

Murree braces for winter tourism

Seven facilitation centres set up as departments placed on alert despite no snowfall forecast

By Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI: The district administration has completed all arrangements to facilitate tourists visiting Murree during the winter season and in the event of snowfall.

"Though there is no forecast of snowfall, the district administration has completed preparations for the winter season and established seven tourist facilitation centres in coordination with the Provincial Disaster Management Authority and the divisional commissioner," said Murree Deputy Commissioner Agha Zaheer Shirazi while talking to *Dawn*.

He said that a mock exercise had been completed, while the Highway Department and other relevant departments had been provided with all available machinery to keep the roads clear.

He added that the district administration would maintain public safety, smooth traffic flow and uninterrupted essential services during snowfall and related emergencies.

He said that facilitation centres had been activated at key locations to assist tourists and residents through information sharing, route guidance, accommodation support and emergency response coordination.

The deputy commissioner said that the Highway Department would ensure the completion of road maintenance, patchwork and repair work on major and link roads across District Murree before the onset of snowfall to prevent traffic disruptions and accidents.

He said the department would also remove all construction material, debris and obstructions from roadsides, culverts, and drainage lines to ensure smooth traffic flow and facilitate snow clearance operations.

"Necessary machinery and equipment, including snow cutters, graders, loaders and tractors, will be deployed at strategic and vulnerable locations such as Jhika Gali, Kashmir Point, Pindi Point, Sunny Bank and Guldana to ensure a timely response during snowfall," he said.

He added that the district administration would maintain close liaison with the Meteorological Department for weather updates and early warnings and would disseminate advisories to relevant departments and the public through official channels.

He said the Health Department would ensure round-the-clock availability of medical staff and senior doctors to handle any emergency arising from snowfall, road blockages, or cold-related illnesses.

The deputy commissioner said the Price Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (Pera) would ensure strict enforcement of price control, anti-hoarding and anti-encroachment regulations during snowfall, particularly in markets, fuel stations and tourist areas.

"Motorway Police will ensure effective traffic management on the Murree Expressway and adjoining routes in close coordination with the District Administration, NHA, Traffic Police and Rescue 1122, particularly during peak snowfall and tourist influx," he said.

He said the Traffic Police would implement a comprehensive traffic management plan for the entire snowfall season, covering all major and link routes expected to be affected during heavy snowfall and tourist movement.

He added that IESCO would ensure uninterrupted power supply to all essential locations, including hospitals, facilitation centres, control rooms, communication towers and tourist accommodation sites, especially during heavy snowfall and peak tourist days.

He said the Tourism Department would deploy the Pakistan Tourism Squad (PTS) at 17 Mile, Phulgran Toll Plaza and other key entry points to guide and facilitate tourists during the snowfall season, especially on weekends and holidays when visitor numbers are high.

The deputy commissioner said that hotel and guest house registration had been completed and the administration was monitoring daily occupancy.

"Snowfall can occur at any time in winter. We need to remain alert, and instructions have been issued to all departments to provide all possible facilities to tourists during snowfall," he said.

Civil defence personnel have been instructed to remain present and available on the streets to ensure the safety of tourists and their property. They will be equipped with communication devices and tasers to break up any disputes.

The Murree tragedy in January 2022, in which 22 tourists lost their lives, was marred by accusations that locals demanded exorbitant amounts from stranded travellers who were forced to spend the night in their vehicles.

Punjab seeks proposals for uplift of agriculture in Potohar region

By Our Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Minister for Agriculture Syed Mohammad Ashiq Hussain Kirmani on Saturday instructed Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi to prepare proposals for uplift of agriculture in the Potohar region.

He said that the University is at the forefront of implementing the CM Punjab's Agriculture Transformation Plan in the Potohar but there was dire need to make more plans to further improve the agriculture in arid agricultural area.

The minister accompanied by Punjab Secretary Agriculture Iftikhar Ali Sahoo visited Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi.

During the visit, the minister and secretary agriculture toured key research and innovation facilities including the Centre for Precision Agriculture, the China–Pakistan Research & Development Center for Modern Agriculture and Efficient Water Technologies, and the Green AI Hydroponic Unit.

The visit highlighted the university's advancements in modern agricultural technologies and its contribution to farmer awareness and capacity building. The minister also chaired a meeting where Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qamar-uz-Zaman presented ongoing projects and university-led interventions aimed at transforming traditional farming systems through technology-driven solutions.

The minister appreciated the university's leadership, noting that Arid University is at the forefront of implementing the Chief Minister Punjab's Agriculture Transformation Plan in the Potohar region.

The minister emphasised the critical role of universities as hubs of research, innovation, and technology transfer. He underscored the importance of Academia–Industry–Government collaboration in achieving sustainable growth in the agriculture sector.

He expressed keen interest in hydroponic agriculture and highlighted the university's specialised hydroponic institute and units, stressing the need to prioritise this technology to boost production and improve food security. Punjab Secretary Agriculture Iftikhar Ali Sahoo also briefed the Minister on the department's efforts to strengthen coordination with agricultural universities.

He shared that new committees have been formed to identify field-level challenges faced by farmers and develop practical, research-backed solutions.

He stressed the value of joint projects between the University and the Agriculture Department aimed at improving productivity and ensuring impactful outcomes.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qamar-uz-Zaman highlighted the university's ongoing mega projects, capacity-building initiatives, and the organization of national and international conferences, workshops, and seminars for farmer training.

He also emphasized the university's focus on indigenous development of affordable modern technologies, noting that faculty experts and researchers have filed several patents, with more underway.

Steps urged to protect patients from 'post-antibiotic era'

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: As the global community observes World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) to discourage the misuse of antibiotics and reduce the risk of creating superbugs, health experts have called for stronger measures to protect Pakistan from a post-antibiotic era.

It is worth mentioning that WAAW is being observed from November 18-24 under the World Health Organisation's theme, "Act Now: Protect Our Present, Secure Our Future," which serves as a critical, urgent warning for Pakistan. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) develops when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites evolve to resist the effects of medications, rendering treatments ineffective. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics are leading contributors to this crisis. Declared one of the greatest threats to global health, AMR could potentially undo decades of medical advancements if not addressed promptly.

Consultant Infectious Diseases and Chair of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Programme (ASP) at Shifa International Hospital Dr Ejaz Ahmed Khan said the nation was rapidly slipping into a post-antibiotic era where common infections, once easily treatable, now lead to traumatic experiences for patients, requiring prolonged hospital stays, highly costly lastresort drugs, and often resulting in tragic loss of life.

"This crisis is primarily fuelled by the widespread misuse of antibiotics by physicians and is driven by the rampant over-the-counter sales. Patients routinely seek and receive antibiotics for viral infections such as the common cold and flu, where these drugs are completely ineffective. This irrational use accelerates the development of extensively drug-resistant (XDR) strains, like those currently challenging our healthcare system," he said.

AJK PM vows to resolve Muzaffarabad's chronic issues

By Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Saturday undertook an extensive visit to the state capital, inspecting ongoing development works and pledging swift action to address the city's long-standing civic and traffic issues.

Residents welcomed the prime minister warmly as he toured various locations, beginning with an inspection of the under-construction flyover outside the Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

Officials briefed him that one track of the flyover would become functional within the next ten days. PM Rathore directed the authorities to ensure its completion within the stipulated timeframe, assuring that the government would provide the required funds.

Speaking to reporters after offering fateha at the grave of his brother-in-law, Lt-Col Asif Ali Awan Shaheed, in the Plate neighbourhood, the prime minister said Muzaffarabad was "the face of the state" and improving its condition was among his top priorities.

A comprehensive traffic management plan would be formulated and implemented, he added.

He expressed full confidence that the federal government would extend complete support for AJK's development projects.

"The schemes included in the federal PSDP for AJK will be implemented without delay, and I will personally meet the prime minister of Pakistan in this regard," he said.

He added that the Mansehra–Muzaffarabad Motorway (M-4) project, as well as the Lohar Gali Tunnel, were also on his government's priority list.

"We will try to initiate projects in Muzaffarabad that bring direct ease to people's lives. We may have limited time, but the present government's team is a 'T-20 team' that will perform by hitting fours and sixes," he remarked.

At the Plate graveyard, he announced the installation of lights and the provision of water facilities. Also in Plate, he inaugurated a commercial centre amid loud slogans in his favour.

During the visit, PM Rathore laid floral wreaths and offered fateha at the shrines of former presidents K.H. Khurshid and Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad Yousuf Shah outside the Municipal Corporation building. He also offered fateha at the nearby graves of veteran leader Raja Muhammad Haider Khan and former prime minister Khan Abdul Hameed Khan.

Inside the Municipal Corporation building, Mayor Sikandar Gilani and Deputy Mayor Khalid Awan briefed him on municipal affairs, while PPP workers accorded him an enthusiastic welcome.

Mr Rathore said the city's biggest challenge was solid waste management and pledged early completion of the ongoing project. "I have a special bond with Muzaffarabad, inherited from my late father, whom this city had once elected as MLA," he added.

During the city tour, the prime minister offered fateha at the graves of several activists and community leaders, including Saqib Riaz — who was killed during protests on the call of the Joint Awami Action Committee — former Central Bar Association president Anjum Nisar Mir, and former chief conservator of forests Syed Ali al-Husnain Fatmi.

AJK Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore is briefed by a senior C&W official on Saturday about an under-construction flyover in Muzaffarabad. — Dawn

Earlier, in the Bela Noor Shah neighbourhood, the prime minister visited the residence of former minister Muhammad Hanif Awan, where he offered condolences before visiting his grave.

Minister for Forests Sardar Javed Ayoub, PPP leader Mukhtar Abbasi and dozens of PPP workers accompanied him during the visit.